



Montgomery County Council

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Montgomery County Council Elects Valerie Ervin as President, Roger Berliner as Vice President for 2010-11 Year

ROCKVILLE, December 7, 2010—The Montgomery County Council today unanimously elected Valerie Ervin as president and Roger Berliner as vice president of the Council. They will serve one-year terms as officers of the Council.

Councilmember Ervin, who represents District 5, served as vice president of the Council for the past year. Councilmember Berliner, who represents District 1, served as vice president of the Council the previous year. On Dec. 6 at Rockville High School, each was sworn in to begin their second term on the Council. Also sworn in as part of the 17th Council of Montgomery County were returning incumbents Phil Andrews, Marc Elrich, Nancy Floreen, George Leventhal and Nancy Navarro. Newly elected Hans Riemer and Craig Rice are beginning their first terms. All were elected in November to four-year terms.

“This year, I propose that we get back to basics, focus on disciplined governing, and implement long-term structural changes in the interest of our community,” said Council President Ervin. “The challenges that we will face during the upcoming year are squarely focused on pocket-book economics, and we will devote our time to maintaining the quality of life in Montgomery County. We must make the tough decisions that will keep this County on the course of greatness that helped to determine why nearly a million people have chosen to live here, and why so many who are drawn to innovation and opportunity choose to work here. We have our challenges, but we will approach them with the confidence of knowing that if any community has the capacity to adapt, it is Montgomery County.”

Council President Ervin represents District 5, which includes Kensington, Silver Spring, Takoma Park and Wheaton. She chairs the Council's Education Committee and serves on the Council's Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee, which conducts budget reviews and program oversight for various County departments and offices. As an advocate for the interests of working families and improving the lives of children, she has pushed Montgomery County to the forefront of the universal preschool movement.

Council Vice President Berliner was first elected to the Montgomery County Council in November 2006 as the District 1 representative for the Bethesda, Chevy Chase, and Potomac areas. He begins the new term as chair of the Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee and as a member of the Public Safety Committee. He also serves as the Council's representative to the County's Sustainability Working Group and Green Economic Task Force. Regionally, he is on the Washington Regional Board of Directors of the Council of Governments where he is an active member of the Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee.

Complete text of new Council President Ervin's remarks today:

As I take the gavel as Council President, I am honored and humbled by the confidence my colleagues have placed in me to be a unifying force on this Council. I take this responsibility, the privilege of serving the residents of Montgomery County, very seriously. I pledge to do my best to ensure that this Council works together as a team through the difficult decisions that lie ahead. We owe nothing less to our devoted residents.

First of all, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our outgoing Council President, and my friend, Nancy Floreen. Nancy, as president, you have ably led our Council through a year of great fiscal and management challenges. Thank you for your guidance and for making sure that working with the Office of Legislative Oversight, this Council now has the data it needs to make the difficult budget decisions that lie ahead.

I have been very blessed with an outstanding staff. Sonya Healy, my chief of staff is an extraordinary person, who has ably run my office for the past four years. I rely on her sound judgment and her no nonsense approach to our work. I also want to thank Rich Romer, Shondell Foster, and Beth Sylvester and acknowledge Ben Stutz, Amparo Guerrero, Carol Edwards and Joseph Eyong for making my first term a fantastic experience.

It has also been my extreme honor to work with the Council staff over the past eight years. Four of those years I was staff myself, and I know from personal experience the level of professionalism and commitment that they bring to the job each and every day on behalf of the Council and the residents of Montgomery County. It is no accident that the majority of my personal staff came from the 5th floor.

At moments such as this, I cannot help but think about my family. I think about my mother, who taught me to fight for what I think is right, as she always did, in her role as a shop steward and statewide leader for the retail clerks union, in Albuquerque, where I grew up. I think about my father, a career Air Force serviceman and a Vietnam War veteran, who I know is looking down at me right now with great pride and maybe a bit of wonder, as someone who grew up in the Jim

Crow south and for whom civil rights battles were not just a history lesson, but something very real and very personal. And I think about my sons and my grandchildren, as I consider the important work we are about to embark on for the future and destiny of our community.

Not long ago I was a union organizer. I organized catfish workers in the Mississippi Delta and poultry workers in the piedmont of North Carolina. I assisted workers at an aluminum smelter in Oregon, a hospital in Rhode Island, a tuna cannery in American Samoa, and garment factories in Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia. Like all working people, they strived for fairness and respect on the job. They wanted the opportunity to provide for their families and to create a bright future for their children. It seems like a long way from there to this day today, but when I look back, I can see that there are many similarities.

I have been elected to represent a community of a million residents who are counting on us to do what we promised to do. As one with more than a quarter century on the front lines of the labor movement, I am deeply committed to fairness for County employees. But fairness also requires that the County can afford to honor its labor contracts. It also requires equitable treatment for taxpayers and service recipients. Our goal is to make Montgomery County a place where residents can raise their children with an eye toward the future, a place where jobs are plentiful and meaningful, a place that is safe and secure, and a place where those who are sick, homeless, unemployed or struggling to make a living know that they are not forgotten.

Tough budget times force us to make choices that are necessary to position ourselves for better days ahead. How we respond to these times says everything about what kind of community we are, and what we want to be when we emerge in more prosperous times. It is quite simple. The time has come for us to address our long-term structural deficit. Let me be clear. Nothing we do this year will be more important than confronting the factors that have led to a structural deficit that is literally crippling our ability to balance the budget and address our County's most critical needs. This is what the hard-working taxpayers of Montgomery County expect, and it is what they deserve.

This year, I propose that we get back to basics, focus on disciplined governing, and implement long-term structural changes in the interest of our community. The challenges that we will face during the upcoming year are squarely focused on pocket-book economics, and we will devote our time to maintaining the quality of life in Montgomery County. We must make the tough decisions that will keep this county on the course of greatness that helped to determine why nearly a million people have chosen to live here, and why so many who are drawn to innovation and opportunity choose to work here. We have our challenges, but we will approach them with the confidence of knowing that if any community has the capacity to adapt, it is Montgomery County.

Our community's collective goals of ensuring that Montgomery County remains a great place to live, work and play should never change. We are committed to preserving our world-class school system, maintaining safe neighborhoods, and creating economic opportunities so our families can thrive. We are also committed to ensuring that Montgomery County remains a place known for its inclusiveness, and for fostering the kind of innovation and discovery that can change the world.

We will definitely have plenty on our plate over the next year. But I want to assure the residents of Montgomery County that we will not lose sight of the big picture. Just as they have done in their own households, we will do what we must to get our County's financial house in order. Our outstanding Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) just completed a comprehensive review of

the economic drivers behind our ongoing structural budget deficit. I am pleased with the quality of the reports and its fresh insights into our economic challenges. I believe that many of the answers we are looking for are found within the wealth of information that is available to us in the OLO report. I look forward to working through the various recommendations from that study with the Council and the Executive, and with input from our employee associations and taxpayers.

I am also looking forward to forging a deeper and more meaningful relationship with our County's Delegation to Annapolis. Montgomery County is truly at a crossroads. The pending decisions about whether or not teacher pensions will be shifted to the counties and the ongoing discussions regarding the State's Maintenance of Effort law will affect Montgomery County for many years to come. We are all on the same team, and now more than ever before it will be necessary to form a united front in Rockville and in Annapolis.

Before I close, let me say a few words about Councilmembers Mike Knapp and Duchy Trachtenberg, who will no longer be sitting up here on Tuesdays, but have clearly left their stamps on this body and this County. Mike is a pragmatic, problem-solver whose presence will be sorely missed. His work as chair of the PHED Committee, on workforce development legislation, on the biotechnology tax credit, and in providing financial assistance to our local farmers will not soon be forgotten. Duchy, a tireless champion of women's rights, spearheaded the effort to create a Family Justice Center, which consolidates services for victims of domestic violence. What a tremendous legacy to leave behind.

I also want to welcome this morning our two newest colleagues, my friends Craig Rice and Hans Riemer. Craig and Hans, I'm really looking forward to working with you both and to the fresh perspectives that I know you will each bring to the table.

The late, great Justice Thurgood Marshall once said, "None of us got where we are solely by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We got here because somebody bent down and helped us pick up our boots."

There are some people in the audience I would like to acknowledge for helping me pick up my boots. Like so many residents in Montgomery County, I wasn't born or raised here. My extended family does not live in the area. But I have been very blessed to have found some people in the community whom I have come to rely on as my adopted family. They have become my true compass. I have received calls from them when they think I have over stepped, or spoken out of turn, but they have also embraced me, prayed for me, and brought me into their homes and their lives: Jeffrey Slavin, Ruby Rubens, Odessa Shannon, Art Williams, Kamala Edwards and Vinod Ghildiyal, Samuel Myers, Reverend Grant, and Wanjiru Kamau, thank you for all that you have done for our community even when no one was watching. And to the best neighbors anyone could ask for, Matthew McClain and Tom and Ellie Hamburger, who have been with me from the very beginning of this journey. I will never be able to thank you enough.

So now the work of the 17th Council begins with a line from a poem by Robert Frost: I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.

Thank you.

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